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And Robert Novak

Bianca Jagger's Hill Briefing

When Bianca Jagger, the pro-Sandinista activist and divorced wife of rock star Mick Jagger, slipped into the top-secret Capitol Hill office of the House Intelligence Committee early this month to brief two of its staffers, her presence confirmed the committee's politicization. For four years under the chairmanship of Rep. Edward Boland, the Intelligence Committee had shown commendable ability to overcome partisan wrangling that destroyed its predecessor committee under Otis Pike. But that admirable record has crumbled under political pressures of the Central American crisis and a runaway staff. As a result, what is supposed to be a bipartisan watchdog over the intelligence community has become a snapping terrier attacking President Reagan's Latin America policy in behalf of the Democratic Party's left wing.

But the invitation to Jagger, a native of Nicaragua and intimate friend of Sandinista strongman Tomas Borge, may provoke Republican members to prevent the committee from becoming a political cockpit. Suspicious GOP members believe the staff was seeking new arguments from her to torpedo Reagan's Central America rescue plan.

That follows the recent course of the committee. Its Democratic majority has voted, on strict party lines, to kill future covert aid for anti-Sandinista insurgents. Such a partisan lineup on what was established as a nonpartisan panel with a politically disinfected staff causes concern in the White House. The hands of the

committee's Republican minority are tied by its lack of minority staff. In the name of nonpartisanship, the Democrats refuse to give the Republicans any staffers.

Degeneration of the prestigious committee into propagandistic activism became obvious last September when two liberal staffers authored a stinging rebuke to Reagan's CIA. It was so nakedly anti-Reagan that retired admiral Bobby Inman, named by Boland as a part-time committee consultant when he resigned as the CIA's deputy director, quit on the spot. The tip-off to politicization was the accusatory tone of the report, which contended that El Salvador had become a "major focus for East-West relations under the newly elected U.S. administration in 1981." That ignored the fact that aid to Nicaragua was cut off and the communist rebellion in Salvador spread during the last two years of the Carter administration.

Inman says privately that he quit because the committee's staff, behind Boland's back, was converting the committee into a vehicle of "partisan political purposes." Boland, a likable old pol from Massachusetts, is regarded by the committee's GOP members as well-meaning but under relentless political pressure from Democratic liberals. He will need their support to achieve his dream of becoming chairman of the House Appropriations Committee some day.

Boland admitted to us that holding the staff in line is not easy, given the pressures of the ideological split over U.S. policy in Nicaragua and Salvador. "We have problems on the staff and that is hard to avoid," he added. Those problems are rooted in the ideological mindset of Boland's staffers, heightened by the possibility that Reagan's success or failure in Central America affects the 1984 presidential election.

That prospect could end Republican silence about what is happening in the Intelligence Committee. No matter how averse its Republican members may be to a counterattack completely destroying the committee's effectiveness, they are appalled by the current climate.

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